

Terms of Reference

University of Southern Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (UniSQ HREC)

Responsible officer	Manager, Research Integrity & Ethics	Approval Date	29 June 2018
Committee Services Officer	Ethics Coordinator	Approval Authority	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)

1. Role

The University is required to ensure that any research conducted under its auspices is conducted in a responsible and ethical manner. In addition, the University is obliged to comply with the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (The National Statement). In accordance with the requirements of The Statement, the University has established the University of Southern Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (UniSQ HREC).

- 1.1 **Strategic Responsibilities:** Ensuring that the principles that govern the ethical conduct of research involving human participants are applied by the University's employees and students.
- 1.2 **Resource Scope:** All staff and students of the University conducting research involving human participants.
- 1.3 **Value Delivery:** Ensures compliance with the national regulatory framework for research integrity and ethics.
- 1.4 **Risk Management:** Reviews human research ethics applications and evaluates risk to participants, the research and the institution, and monitors risk through progress reports.
- 1.5 **Performance Measures:** Compliance with the national regulatory framework for research integrity and ethics.

2. Function

The UniSQ HREC will:

- 2.1 Examine, approve, approve with recommendation/s, conditionally approve, or reject, written proposals for research activities involving human participation on the basis of ethical implications, compliance requirements, and the scientific and/or educational merit of the proposed research;
- 2.2 Monitor the conduct of approved research activities until their completion to ensure compliance with relevant requirements, and may withdraw approval for any activity;
- 2.3 Contribute to the development and review of guidelines, policy and procedure relating to ethical issues arising from research involving human participants, as appropriate;
- 2.4 Perform all other duties required by The National Statement.

¹ A hard copy of this electronic document is uncontrolled and may not be current. The latest controlled version can be found on the USQ website.

3. Authority

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

4. Membership

In accordance with the membership provisions of The National Statement, the minimum membership of the UniSQ HREC will be eight (8) persons, as follows:

4.1. Membership Category

- 4.1.1 Chairperson – a person with suitable experience whose other responsibilities will not impair the UniSQ HREC's capacity to carry out its obligations under The National Statement.
- 4.1.2 At least two (2) lay people, one (1) man and one (1) woman who have no affiliation with the University of Southern Queensland and are not currently engaged in medical, scientific, legal or academic work.
- 4.1.3 At least one (1) person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people, for example, a nurse or allied health professional.
- 4.1.4 At least one (1) person who performs a pastoral care role in a community, for example, an Aboriginal elder, or a minister of religion.
- 4.1.5 At least one (1) lawyer, where possible one who is not engaged to advise the institution.
- 4.1.6 At least two (2) people with current research experience.
- 4.1.7 The Manager, Research Integrity and Ethics may attend meetings in an advisory capacity to the UniSQ HREC, as required.
- 4.1.8 As far as possible:
 - there should be an equal number of men and women;
 - at least one-third of members should be from outside the University;
 - one or more members should be experienced in reflecting on and analysing ethical decision-making; and
 - meetings will be arranged to enable at least one (1) member of each category to attend.*

**S5.2.30 of The National Statement permits a Human Research Ethics Committee to consider applications where there is less than full attendance of the minimum membership (i.e. one (1) representative from each category of membership), so long as absent members have received a copy of the applications and the Chairperson is satisfied, before a decision is reached, that the views of those absent who belong to the minimum membership have been received and considered through written comments provided to the meeting beforehand.*

4.2. Responsibilities of UniSQ HREC Members

In accordance with Chapter 5.2 of The National Statement, UniSQ HREC members are responsible for determining whether a proposal submitted to the UniSQ HREC meets the requirements of The National Statement and is ethically acceptable. To fulfill that responsibility, each member of the UniSQ HREC must be familiar with The National Statement, and consult other guidelines relevant to the review of specific proposals; prepare for and attend scheduled meetings of the UniSQ HREC and, if unavailable, provide opinions on the ethical acceptability of

research proposals prior to the meeting; participate in appropriate education and training programs on a regular basis (and at least annually); and disclose perceived, potential, and actual conflicts of interests on any matters coming before the UniSQ HREC.

4.3. Casual Vacancies

In the case where a member is absent from two or more consecutive meetings without having been granted leave of absence, that member shall be deemed to have vacated the position, resulting in a casual vacancy.

4.4. Working Parties, Co-option and Observers

The UniSQ HREC may invite people with specific expertise to provide advice as required.

4.5. USQ HREC Delegations

The UniSQ HREC has established the following delegations:

UniSQ non-HREC Review Process	UniSQ HREC Delegation
Expedited review by at least two (2) appropriately qualified and trained officers of the University of Southern Queensland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negligible and low risk HRE applications
School Coordinator Review (Pilot Program with the School of Psychology and Counselling only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negligible and low risk applications submitted by School of Psychology and Counselling staff and undergraduate, honours, and postgraduate coursework and research students.
Executive Review (which will normally comprise the review and approval of items by the UniSQ HREC Chairperson and/or UniSQ HREC Deputy Chairperson/s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negligible and low risk registration of other Australian registered and/or certified HREC approved projects Negligible and low risk HRE Amendment requests Review and approval of any other Item Under Review referred by the UniSQ HREC (such as review and approval of responses to conditionally approved HRE Applications);
Office of Research Review (which will normally comprise the review and approval of items by a suitably qualified and trained staff member of the Research Integrity & Ethics team).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of HRE Milestones (progress and final reports) where the progression of the approved project is straightforward.

5. Meetings, Reporting and Minutes

Frequency of Meetings:	The UniSQ HREC will normally meet as per the University Calendar scheduled dates. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson as required.
Reports To:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation). A report on governance and/or operational matters from each meeting may be referred to the Research Committee of Academic Board.
Minutes:	Meetings will be formally minuted.

6. Ethical Practices, Confidentiality and Independence

Members of the UniSQ HREC are to:

- exercise objectivity and integrity in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities;
- refrain from entering into any activity that may prejudice their ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities objectively and independently;
- act in a proper and prudent manner in the use of information acquired in the course of their duties and responsibilities, particularly in regard to the maintenance of confidentiality and privacy of information;
- exercise sound judgement guided by highest personal standards of honesty and integrity in all matters relating to membership of the UniSQ HREC;
- ensure that they do not place themselves in situations which could lead to, or be perceived to, give rise to a conflict of interest;
- disclose to the UniSQ HREC any matter which could compromise, or be seen to compromise, the performance of their duties on the UniSQ HREC or give rise to a perception of a conflict of interest; and
- have a sound understanding of the University's Code of Conduct.

7. Secretary

The Committee Services Officer to the UniSQ HREC is the Ethics Coordinator.

8. Review of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the Manager, Research Integrity and Ethics, annually or earlier if required by external regulatory bodies.

9. Modification History

Date	Source	Details
21/03/2014	M,RIE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removal of member names from public document• Title change from Manager, Research Integrity and Governance to Manager, Research Integrity and Ethics
19/06/2018	Manager, Research Integrity & Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revision of nomenclature of Committee to USQ HREC• Revision of nomenclature of The Statement to The National Statement• Minor revision of 4.1 Responsibilities of USQ HREC Members to clarify requirements for member training and declaration of perceived, potential, and/or actual conflicts of interest• Major revision of 4.4 Sub Committees to 4.4 Delegations and content revised to include current review and approval delegations approved by USQ HREC• Minor revision of 5. 1, 5.2, and 5.3 to reflect current processes• Deletion of "Decisions between meetings" from 5.

29/06/2018	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Terms of Reference approved
28.09.2022	Ethics Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Converted Terms of Reference to new UniSQ branding as per requirements of the University of Southern Queensland 2022 Brand Reputation Project. Revised all references of USQ to UniSQ as per the rebrand requirements. Moved trim location to the footer and replaced with Committee Services Officer details.